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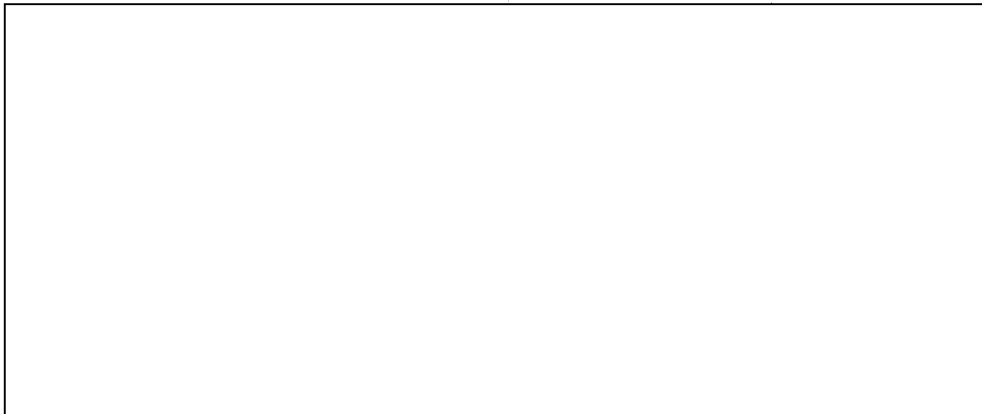
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SAUDI ARABIA - IRAQ: Offer To Help Rebuild Reactor

The Saudi announcement yesterday that Riyadh would be willing to underwrite the cost of rebuilding the Iraqi reactor destroyed by Israel may be little more than a gesture to show solidarity with Iraq. Baghdad recently criticized Saudi Arabia for not being more supportive. The Saudis have been concerned about the prospect of Iraqi nuclear weapons and may have sought private assurances from the French on safeguards.

There is no indication of Baghdad's reaction to the Saudi offer. The Iraqis can easily afford to rebuild the reactor themselves as the cost is relatively low. They would not accept Saudi financing if it gave Riyadh a chance to impose conditions on the use of the reactor. In any event, the Israelis will get propaganda mileage out of the offer, using it to portray the Saudis as collaborators in producing an "Arab bomb."



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